

**44<sup>th</sup> House District**

Lucas County  
Ottawa County  
Wood County

**Committees**

Energy  
Finance  
Judiciary  
Rules and Reference  
Workforce and Higher  
Education



**Columbus Office**

Vern Riffe Center  
77 South High Street, 11<sup>th</sup>  
Floor,  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Phone: (614) 466-1418  
[Rep44@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:Rep44@ohiohouse.gov)

**State Representative Joshua E. Williams  
Ohio House of Representatives**

Chairman Stewart, Vice-Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 101. I would also like to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Mohamed, for bringing this legislation forward.

As he stated, this legislation would establish a scholarship dedicated to encouraging students to pursue legal education. As a pilot program, its first iteration would choose around 10-20 Ohio students who come from groups that are underrepresented in the legal profession. In addition to receiving a scholarship of \$4,000, these students will also gain access to one-on-one mentoring, free test preparation materials, academic support, and registration for the Law School Admissions Test. In all, \$350,000 would be appropriated to the Department of Higher Education to establish this program.

Upon passage of this bill, the Ohio Bar Association must monitor the administration, outcomes, and revenues/expenses of this pilot program. By early 2028, they must then submit a report that outlines this to the Chancellor of Higher Education, the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, and the Senate Higher Education Committee.

This legislation is essential for our state. Over the past few years, we have seen a shortage of lawyers in Ohio, especially in rural areas. According to data from the Ohio Bar Association, possible clients outnumber attorneys by more than 700 to 1 in 82 of Ohio's 88 counties<sup>1</sup>. Needless

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/2025/03/25/laweys-ohio-rural-counties-bar-shortage-legal-law/82519157007/>

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to say, this shortage causes immense problems for residents of rural areas; with most lawyers concentrated in large metropolitan areas, rural residents simply do not have the options they need for legal representation. By creating this pilot program, the legislature can finally acknowledge this issue and take steps to solve it.

Legal education, though difficult, is vitally important for our next generation. If you told me at age 21 that I would become a lawyer, I would never have believed you. The barriers to entry were too high for a young adult who grew up like I did. We have the power to change this mindset and encourage students from all backgrounds to pursue legal education. I am standing here now as a result of programs like this; I feel it is my duty to give back to those who grew up like I did, and work to offer resources for all students in Ohio who aspire to achieve.

Chairman Stewart, Vice-Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 101. I welcome any questions you may have.